

CAMDEN, Charles  
Pity the Poor Blind.

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“PITY THE POOR BLIND.”

THERE is one of Dickens's characters even more repulsive, perhaps, than Uriah Heep—to wit, Stagg, the blind man in “Barnaby Rudge.” And yet there is force in what he says to Widow Rudge, when he has tracked her and her idiot son to their country hiding-place, and thrown off the mask—“Bah! you needn't speak. I know what you would say. . . . Have I no feeling for you because I am blind? No, I have not. Why do you expect me, being in darkness, to be better than men who have their sight? . . . It's the cant of you folks to be horrified if a blind man robs, or lies, or steals. Oh, yes; it's far worse in him, who can barely live on the few halfpence that are thrown to him in the streets than in you, who can see, and work, and are not dependent on the mercies of the world. A curse on you! You, who have five senses, may be wicked at your pleasure. We, who have four, and want the most important, are to live and be moral on our affliction.”

But Stagg's, although, perhaps, a natural character from a novelist's *à priori* point of view, is, I think, a very rare one amongst blind men. Of course, a man does not necessarily gain sanctity by losing his eyesight. Some blind men are scamps; but the proportion of scamps would, I am inclined to believe, be found to be less amongst blind men than in any other class of people. There may be a certain amount of cant in the religious tone which is so common amongst the blind, but a genuine *religiosity*, at any rate, seems to be very widely spread amongst them. This results, of course, to a large extent, from the fact that, if deprived of many pleasures, they are also screened from many temptations, and are forced into habits of introspection. “The loss of sight changes a man,” said a blind man; “he doesn't think of women, and women don't think of him. We are of a religious turn, too, generally.”

Under the head of “Pity the poor blind,” blind beggars first suggest themselves. There are still some literal blind beggars, men who stand by the highway side begging, either verbally or by the mute appeal of a label inscribed “I am blind” pinned upon their breast; their dogs, with pleading eyes and anxiously-wagging tails, seconding the appeal. Some of the talkers merely toll out, “Pity the poor blind,” in a funereal tone,

very much as the railway porters at Tring announce the name of that station; others indulge in little harangues. One day in a “Nelson” omnibus I fell in with a tall man, dressed in clerical-looking clothes, not nearly so greenish-brown and threadbare as those a good many overworked London curates are obliged to wear. Misunderstanding, or pretending to misunderstand, some remark I had made to a companion, the tall man began to lecture me loftily on the ignorance and inhumanity I had displayed in sneering at those whom it had pleased the Almighty to deprive of sight, quoting Scripture largely against me. I had said nothing about blind people, and did not know, until I looked at him closely, that the man was blind. However, as I thought that I had wounded his feelings, I apologised for the unintentional offence I had given him, and we got into conversation, throughout which he maintained a *de haut en bas* tone towards me, laying down the law most oracularly, but throwing out hints now and then about money, which when I heard them I could not understand.

At last the 'bus pulled up in Deptford Broadway, and the blind man got out, graciously allowing me to shake hands with him, in token that he bore no malice, before he departed. When he was gone a man at the top of the 'bus burst into a roar of laughter.

“Do you know who it is,” he said to me, “you've been talking so respectfully to all this time? The old rogue's a blind beggar. He lodges somewhere about here,—not in Mill Lane, he's a cut above that. He's got a pitch just now in the New Kent Road, and rides to business and back again just like any City man.”

A few weeks afterwards I came upon my blind friend holding forth in his professional capacity to a congregation of half-a-dozen at a street-corner in Camberwell, and found that he had given me a good bit of his street sermon in the omnibus.

This man, I should say, had quite enough ability—especially since he had no lack of self-assertion—to have made enough to support himself without sponging on other people; but are there not a good many beggars that have their eyesight of whom the same might be said with greater emphasis? I am not standing up for blind beggars. They are, as I should have supposed, even if I



had not been told by those who know them well, the blind people who are least worthy of pity—a pity that can be coupled with respect. But we must remember the exceptional difficulties a blind man has to encounter if he would really earn his own living. It is easy, therefore, to understand, although, of course, impossible to defend, the feeling which prompts a few blind men to make trading capital out of their affliction.

"Tom Thumb gets lots of money for not being his proper size," says a blind beggar; "why shouldn't I get a little money for not having my proper eyes? It ought to be made up to me somehow."

There are, moreover, blind beggars, good authority states, who might have their sight restored, but who will not consent to have an operation performed; being of opinion that the result would be a "kicking up-stairs"—they might recover some kind of sight, but they would not be able to make so much money.

The blind street musicians, monotonous blind readers on river and canal bridges, and blind sellers of small goods in the streets, are, in a strictly logical sense, blind beggars. People don't buy the goods because they want them, or pay for the reading or music, as a rule, because they like the sound; but because they pity the blind sellers, readers, and musicians. But this phase of blind beggary is markedly differentiated from the former. Of course, the two run into one another. Some of these sellers, and so on, only pretend to do something for themselves in order to evade police supervision and appeal more forcibly to the "charitable public;" but the bulk of them persuade themselves that they are giving money's worth for money. They want to feel that they are doing something other people can get some good out of, instead of merely lazily uttering, more or less rhetorically, "Pity the poor blind." To the credit of the London street blind it should be recorded that they endeavoured to establish a benefit club without assistance; but it failed because there were not members enough to spread its risks over.

Some years ago one of the most "kenspeckle" sights in London streets was a blind old woman in a poke bonnet, with flabbily-plump cheeks, a nut-cracker nose and chin, and a good-natured grin, who ground out tunes from a hurdy-gurdy as if she were grinding coffee; whilst another old woman in a poke-bonnet held out the saucer, and kept hold of the hurdy-gurdyist, and affectionately sharp

watch over her, like dragon-watch with most enchanted eye, guarding fair Hesperian fruit. The two poor old women were run over, and the guide was killed upon the spot; the hurdy-gurdyist dodging Death, for the time, with broken bones. The two were taken to the hospital in the same cab; the broken-boned blind woman groping for her dead friend, and when she touched her, entreating the corpse to answer her. The blind woman, after a long while, was discharged from hospital. She was no longer able to play upon the hurdy-gurdy, but managed for a few months to hop on crutches to the houses of those who had been in the habit of giving her a trifle every week, and then—she died, alone in one of those dismal courts running out of Gray's Inn Road. Another blind street-musician I never see now; a Silenus-like man, who used often to be seen (generally in front of a public-house) performing lazily on drum and Pan's-pipes in a hoodless Bath chair, pulled by a boy, and pushed by a young woman. I am told that a blind-man beggar is considered a "catch" by female mendicants who can see. They think his loss a gain for themselves, and compete for engagement in his service.

The violin and the violoncello, the harp, the flute, the fife, bells, and bagpipes, are other instruments on which I have heard blind street-musicians perform. The proficiency in music which blind chamber and organ-loft performers have been known to attain being taken into consideration, it seems rather strange that blind street-musicians do not reach a higher average of excellence, or, at any rate, endurability. In old times, the tradition runs, a blind street-musician could earn, or rather make, his £2 a day in London streets. He certainly cannot make any thing like that sum now. All classes of people, except the St. Simonians and the Millenarians, are apt to put their golden age in the past. I will keep, however, details about the street blind for a second paper; and finish the present one with an account of a few of the many blind who wish to work, in the ordinary sense, for their living.

Not far from new St. Pancras Church there is an unpretending brush, mat, and basket-shop. You might pass it a dozen times without noticing any difference between it and other shops of the kind. But when you look more closely, you see that it is one of the depôts of the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind. The Association's title is painted above the shop,



and one of its donation-boxes opens its ever-thirsty lips lower down. Here, and in a smarter shop in Oxford Street, the work of the industrious blind is exposed for sale. It is a varied collection. There are all kinds of brushes, brooms, and baskets; table-mats, fire-screens, clothes-beaters; dogs' houses, bassinets, children's chairs, wicker chairs, and garden-chairs. Besides making chairs, the blind re-cane them for a shilling each, including carriage from and to the customer's house. A blind traveller goes about in London to obtain orders.

Most of the Association's workers work at their own homes, but a few on the Euston Road and Oxford Street premises. It may be worth while to take a stroll over the Euston Road house. It is an old-fashioned place, full of unexpectedly-opening doors, up-and-down steps, and short, dark, winding, narrow, shallow staircases. In all the work-rooms capital fires are burning. In one, behind a counter horned with little vices, the brushmakers are at work. One man bores the backs with a machine; half a dozen others pop and wire the tufts of bristles into the holes quite as deftly as if they had their sight. Another man in the same room is making mops; as he finishes tying each, he coils it on his cord, and can tell in an instant whether he has kept the balance true. In another room eight women are tying up bundles of firewood, whilst a ninth sits on the floor re-caning a chair. She is a cheerful body, and laughs heartily when she is asked whether she feels for the holes. "No, no, sir," she says, "that would take up a deal of much time." And as she speaks, the cane-slip goes in and out, up and down, under her swift fingers with unerring precision. One mistake would make all her plait wrong. She can give no explanation of her *modus operandi* beyond—"It's just use, I suppose." When the remark is made to her that she could not do her work better if her blindness were cured, she answers pathetically, "Ah, sir, but I miss my eyesight in so many other ways." In the next room three or four men are tying up firewood, whilst an old man basks like a cat before the fire, sipping coffee out of a jug. A dark closet in this room is the storeroom of the blind superintendent of the blind workmen. Twine, bristles, &c., are ranged along its shelves, and seems annoyed when he is complimented on the readiness with which he distinguishes the bristles from dark. "Why, any one that can see wouldn't want his eyes," he says, "to tell the difference between these

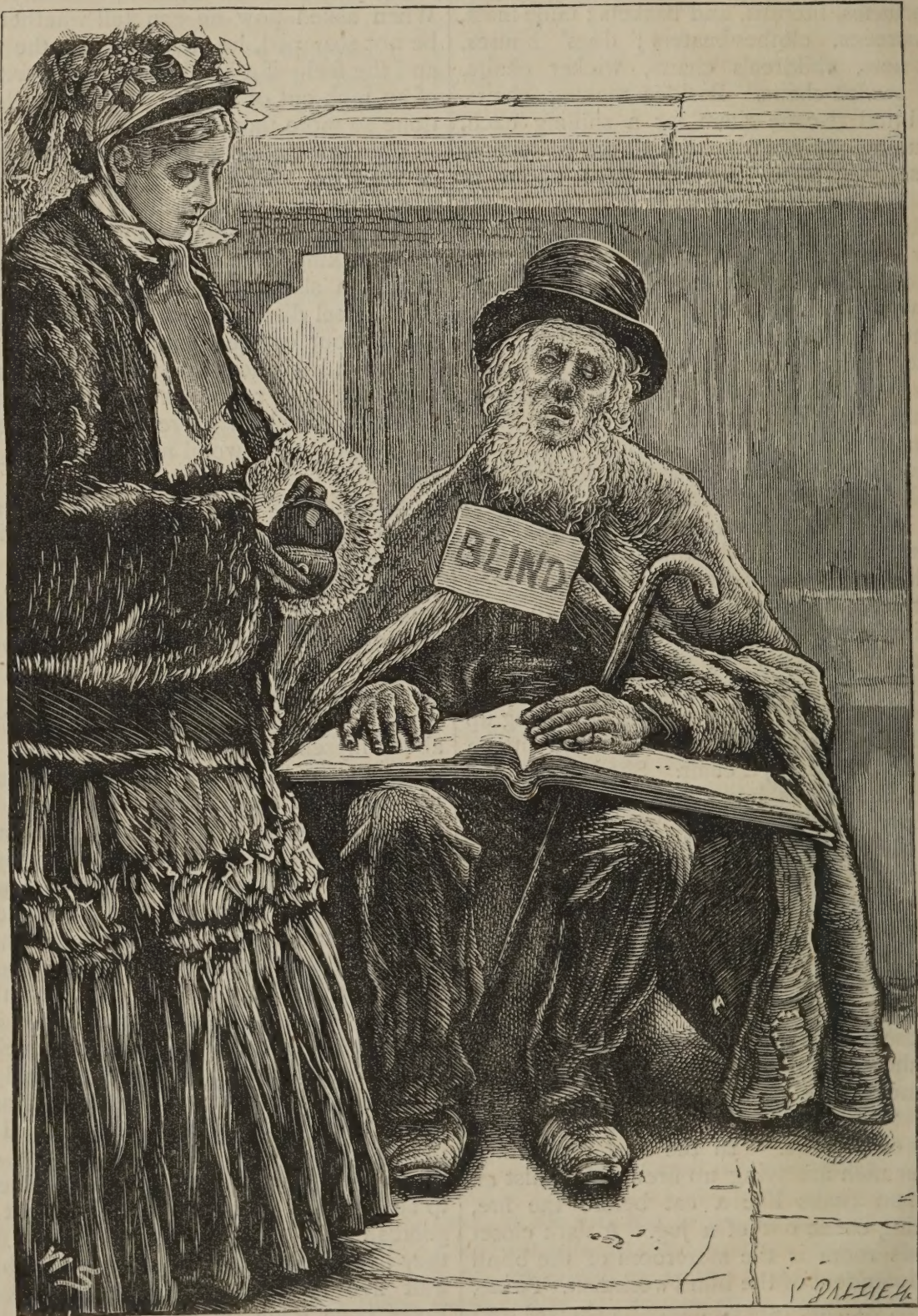
two bundles. The touch is so different. Feel them for yourself. These black ones come from Russia mostly; these others from Moldavia—which is a part of Poland, you know," he unfortunately adds. When asked how he can tell whether work be not scamped, he answers, "By the weight and the feel—if a brush-back is the sixteenth of an inch out of the square, I can tell. I've done so more than once."

The Association sells a very large quantity of firewood. The next room is strewn with a rattling, crackling drift of it, which men, sitting behind chopping-blocks, are momentarily making deeper. Another man, seated behind a slab of wood, in which a sharp-edged steel disc is supported on an axle, gives a call; four of the choppers rise and begin to turn a big wheel with winch-handles; the steel disc spins round, and the man seated at the slab, on which there is a raised bar to guide him, moves wood up to the disc's sharp edge and cuts it up into oblongs of equal size, shaving off even quarter-inches of superfluous breadth. He has never met with an accident.

One or two autobiographies of these blind workers may now be jotted down. At the Oxford Street dépôt a tallish man comes up into the manager's room, is piloted to a chair, sits down, and speaks as follows:—

"No, sir, I've no objection to tell you about myself. I know what you want it for—for the good of the blind, I suppose. I lost my sight when I was six years old. It was an accident—a boy threw a stone at me. I was born in Durham, but I lost my sight in Yorkshire. I was recommended to come up to London; so I came, in '49, but the doctors could do nothing for me. I was got into St. George's School, other side of the river. I was there six years and a half, and then I was thrown on my own resources. I'd learnt shoemaking, but I couldn't make much out of it. Now I can do carpentering, and work a lathe, and I can make mops, and brushes, and brooms, and baskets, and chairs. I walk in and out between this and Kilburn every day. Oh no, sir, I shall have no objection to see you any evening at my place, but it's a goodish step. *Friends come to see me?* Why, they live at Kilburn. Well, yes, I've had to wait five minutes and more at crossings. Folks have gone by, and took not a bit of notice. P'raps they didn't know I was blind. I can't say I wish I had my sight. I was so young, you see, when I lost it that I've never missed it. I suppose it was done for the best, or somethin' o' that sort. Yes, I can sing







a bit, but nothing to speak of. I'm reckoned a good chess-player—leastways 't isn't often I get beat. Sometimes I play with the boards with the raised squares, and sometimes with the common boards. Yes, I've got the whole board in my mind's eye like, and if you say, 'Queen to King's Bishop's fourth,' and so on, I've a full notion of where you've put her. Yes, I've *heard* of Mr. Morphy playing ever so many blindfold games at the same time—difficult work, I should say, to keep one board from running into another. It's curious, but I can't tackle draughts near so well as I can chess. Just because there's only the one slanting move, it bothers me. Oh, as to huffing, I've to feel all over the board before I can tell about that."

The next blind man has a very simple story to tell, but his face twitches sadly before the poor fellow can force it out: "My wife's blind as well as me, but she manages the house famous—does everything as nice as need be. We've two children. Oh, no, *they* ain't blind."

Then there comes in a square-built, communicative man, though he is utterly deaf as well as blind. An intelligent lad is called up to act as interpreter, and puts my questions by touching the finger alphabet on the blind man's hand. When, however, I have learnt his address, and caught the trick of communicating with him, I go up to him to tell him that I will call next evening to have a chat with him at his own home. At first he thinks that I am only going to shake hands with him, and gives my hand a hearty squeeze; but when he finds that I am manipulating his fingers, his sightless face brightens up all over, and he exclaims, "Oh, I am so glad, sir, that you can talk to me!" After dark the next day I discover my blind and deaf friend's address in a seedy street leading out of Oxford Street, and stumble up a dark staircase to his lofty lodging. I find that he has a wife and little daughter. The wife is busy in household cares—first bed-making, and then stitching. The little daughter is dispatched to a friend's for a carved horse and a leg-tobacco-stopper, which the blind man contributed to the Islington Workmen's Exhibition. She soon comes back with them, proud and breathless; bringing also the bound catalogue of the exhibition. Her father's name figures in it in print—it is the most important record in the world to the little girl, and therefore she can scarcely believe her ears—very openly compassionates my deplorable ignorance when I ask her what it is, as she lays it before me with a flourish.

The blind man guesses at my words before they are half spelt, and finishes my sentences for me before I have got half through them. To express assent I have to raise his hand; and to touch his arm in order to stop his rapid flow of speech. *Tick-tick* goes the clock in the smoky, crowded room. By the light of the little lamp that stands on the chapped oil-cloth cover of the little table, I jot down these notes of his history: "I am now thirty-two years of age. I was born at Hoxton. My parents were cowkeepers. I had one brother and two sisters. My brother is dead. One of my sisters lives at Walsall in Staffordshire, the other comes to see me. I have been at work since I was nine years old. Father failed in business through disease in his cattle, and so I didn't get the education the other three had. I worked at three different places until I was fourteen years old, and at the age of fourteen I was apprenticed to a bookbinder's tool-cutter and brass-engraver. I served there until the latter part of my seventeenth year. I worked until I could not see the space between two leaders, and although an in-door apprentice, I had to come home, and was supported by my widowed mother and two sisters. Following June my mother died, and following March I quite lost my hearing. My misfortune came on by bathing. The water was very cold. I fell in, and it gave me a turn. One eye seemed as if it was covered with curd. I had my eye lanced, but wouldn't have it done again. And then the light went from me altogether, after a bit. First I could see my hand, and then I couldn't see anything, except that, night or day, there was no difference—always a kind of light round me, but I couldn't see anything in it. Twelve months afterwards, my hearing went away from me. I carved chests, and so on, and modelled a horse when I was nineteen. My former employer gave me some books. Oh yes, sir, I was perfectly fond of reading, and I soon learned to read the raised letters. I soon got through the books. There was *Matthew*, and *John*, and *The Psalms*, and *Robinson Crusoe*. Being told that there was a library in the Euston Road, and thinking I might obtain books there, I went, without the slightest idea of getting work there, and Mrs. Levy told me I could have some books. Then she took me into a large workshop, and I was introduced where there was a dozen men at work on brooms and brushes. Oh yes, sir, I can judge of sizes. Look at these two brushes now" [taking down two]. "Ain't it easy to



judge which is the biggest by the feel of 'em? Oh, about the size of the room? I felt somehow it was bigger. Oh no, sir, I can't tell whether a man's tall or short till I put my hand on his shoulder. Oh yes, sir" [with a grin], "I can tell now you're a long un. Mr. Levy was there, and asks me what I can do. I told him I could carve many things with my knife. 'Bring me some to show,' says Mr. Levy. I did so, and the first words he said was—'God has blessed your hands—you must come to work here.' Says I, 'I should like to work, but I'm afraid it will be very dull for me. I trust in a few months I shall be able to hear again.' But that wasn't to be. Yes, I'm a passable sort of a chess-player, sir."

The blind man mounts on a chair—his wife fancies he is going to make a spill of either himself or the things on the shelf he is fingering, and rushes to his assistance; but without any help he adroitly pulls out his chess-board from superincumbent strata of books, &c. Every other square is raised; all the squares have holes in them, like those of the railway chess-boards. My blind man dresses his board almost as quickly as I could have done it for him. I ask him how he can distinguish the two sets of men. "Can't you see, sir?" he answers, with a merry grin—"well, then, you feel." I find that the black men have all a tiny knob on their heads. "But I don't care much for chess," he says. "I haven't time for it. On Saturdays I go

out to Dalston and thereabouts for orders. And when I've got time, I'd rather have a friend that would come to talk to me or read to me. Chess is an unsociable sort of a game. You mayn't believe it, sir, but you're the only gentleman that ever came to talk to me in my own home. I often feel utterly all alone—I sit as quiet as an owl. Chess is just the same sameness all over again."

"Oh, yes, my little gal goes to school, and we pay for her," says the wife, "and she reads and writes very nicely; and my husband—though 'tain't orfen we can git to a place o' washup—explains the Bible of a Sunday evening beautiful, better than any minister."

And then she calls my attention to a Chinese-like puzzle of ball and rods, which her husband has carved out of a block of wood.

"I've been ten years trying to get into Day's Charity," says the blind man, who only appeals *ad misericordiam* when he is prompted by his wife.

"And he's far more deservin' of it then lots that have got it," says the wife.

"If you've any interest with printers, sir, will you say a good word for me?" says the blind man, as he gives my hand a good-bye squeeze. "I'm a good hand at making brushes to brush their type with."

"That he is—he can do anything he sets his mind to," says the wife; and then the lean little daughter lights me down the dark stairs.

CHARLES CAMDEN.

## THE GIN-PALACE AND THE WORKING MAN'S CLUB.

DURING the commencement of the fierce war which has lasted so many years between the advocates of total abstinence from intoxicating liquors and those interested, either directly or indirectly, in the present public-house system, a third party has sprung up, who propose abolishing, to a great extent, the evils of intemperance by the establishment of the Working Man's Club. And not only are the arguments brought forward by the promoters of this scheme worthy of the grave consideration of the public at large, but they are urged with a moderation of tone and language which contrasts most favourably with the narrow philosophy so often to be found in the well-meant appeals of the teetotallers and the foul abuse of many of their opponents. Indeed, so forcibly are we struck with many of the arguments of the Working Man's Club promoters, that we propose offering them a modicum of assist-

ance, by drawing a comparison between the working of the club-house, properly conducted, and the gin-palace.

In the first place, let us examine the principal, and certainly most specious, argument of the supporters of the present public-house system. They maintain that the public-house is, in the fullest sense of the word, the Working Man's Club, and that if any difference can be stated between the manner they are conducted and the West-end Clubs, it is merely in the fact that the public at large are protected by the license the victualler holds from any abuse which might otherwise occur were the trade thrown open or the licenses abolished, leaving the public-house as unrestrained in its management as the club-house. They also argue that it is unjust to limit or curtail the number of the present Working Men's Clubs (public-houses), while no restriction as to numbers is placed on the clubs of



infant Saviour being torn from the arms of the central Madonna. Here, perhaps, is the climax of the destruction. On either side were the royal tombs: Jaime El Conquistador; Alonzo II.; Ferdinand I. and his two sons, Juan II. and Alonzo V.; Pedro IV. and his three queens; Juan I. and his two, with many princes and princesses of royal blood. The monuments remain, but so altered, so battered with chisel and hammer, that scarcely a fragment of their beautiful ornaments is intact, and the effigies have entirely disappeared. Caryatides without arms or faces, floating angels wingless and headless, flowers without stems, and leaves without branches, all dust-laden, cracked, and crumbling, scarcely testify to what they have been; and thus it is throughout. From the sacristy blackened with fire, where one portion of the gorgeous Venetian framework still hangs in mockery, one is led to the dormitory of the novices, where the divisions of the cells may be traced, though none are left, and to the refectory, where the fountain may still be seen, where, in this hot climate, the luxury of iced water always played during dinner in a central marble bason, while, from a stone pulpit, a reader refreshed the souls of the banqueters. The great cloister remains comparatively entire, surrounded with tombs, and enclosing, amid a thicket of roses which have survived the fate of all else, a portico, with a now dry fountain, once of many streams, where the monks in summer afternoons were wont to be regaled with chocolate. This was voluntary chocolate; but another room is shown in which it is remembered that obligatory chocolate was served every morning, for fear any brother should faint during the celebration of mass.

Beyond the great cloister, which is of the richest pointed architecture,—every capital varied in fresh varieties of sculpture,—is an earlier cloister, formed by low, narrow, round-headed, thick-set arches of the twelfth century. Above one side of the great cloister, rich in the delicate tracery of its still remaining windows, rises the shell of the palace of Martino El Humilde. Space would not suffice to describe in detail each court with its distinctive features, through which the visitor is led in increasing wonder and distress, to the terrible torture-chamber, which is wisely shown last, as offering the clue and key to the whole. But surely no picture that the world can offer of the sudden destruction of human power can be more appalling than fallen Poblet, beautiful still, but most awful, in the agony of its unexpected destruction?

In the summer, the solitude is broken by a perfect school of young architects, from Italy, Prussia, and America, who come hither to study; but in England Poblet is little known. The time is so short since its destruction, that of the sixty-six monks who occupied the convent at the time, many are still living. At Poblet they wore the white Bernardine habit, and at mass they officiated in long trains of white; but the feeling against them is still so bitter, that if one of them reappeared in his former costume he would be immediately assassinated. Each has retired to his family. We asked the guide if none had ever revisited their former home. "Yes," he said, "five of the friars came last summer; but they could not bear to look. They wept and sobbed the whole time they were here; it was piteous to see them."

AUGUSTUS J. C. HARE.

## "PITY THE POOR BLIND."

### II.

MANY of the blind are both very quick and very sensitive. Before my former paper had been out a fortnight I found that it had been rather angrily discussed at meetings of the Poor Blind in London. I was accused of having been hard upon the blind in my descriptions and remarks. I can only say that I am heartily sorry that I should have given pain to these poor people. God knows that I meant no "hardness." I merely wished to give a fair statement of facts.

Since I wrote the former paper I have run through "Blindness and the Blind" (Chap-

man and Hall, 1872), dedicated by the intelligent author, the blind director, to the benevolent blind foundress of the Association for Promoting the General Welfare of the Blind. The book is an almost complete cyclopædia of interesting facts in connection with those who have lost their sight, and certainly the compiler deeply sympathises with those who share his affliction. Nevertheless, Mr. Levy fully bears me out in what I said or hinted, as to exceptional cases of indolence and immorality amongst the blind—indeed, he is far more severe upon



of Poblet became more exclusive; their number was reduced to sixty-six, but into that sacred circle no novice was introduced in whose veins ran other than the purest blood of a Spanish grandee. He who became a monk of Poblet had to prove his pedigree, and the chapter sate in solemn deliberation upon his quarterings. Every monk had his two servants, and rode upon a snow-white mule. The mules of the friars were sought through the whole peninsula at an enormous expense. Within the walls, every variety of trade was represented; no monk need seek for anything beyond his cloister; the tailors, the shoemakers, the apothecaries, had each their wing or court. Hospitals were raised on one side for sick and ailing pilgrims: on the other rose a palace appropriated to the sovereigns who sought the cure of their souls. The vast produce of the vineyards of the mountainous region which depended upon Poblet, was brought to the great convent wine-presses, and was stowed away in its avenue of wine-vats. "El Pírorato" became one of the most reputed wines in the country: the pipes, the presses, the vats where it was originally prepared, still remain almost entire.

Year by year the power of the convent increased, till, like autocratic sovereigns, the friars of Poblet issued their commands, and the surrounding country had only to hear and obey. He who failed to attend to the summons of their mass-bell, had to answer to the monks for his neglect. Strange rumours began to float of peasants who, entering the convent gates, had never been known to come forth. Gradually the monks became the bugbear of neighbouring children, and threats, which tampered with their names, were whispered by the lace-making mothers in the ears of their naughty little ones. At last came the wars of Don Carlos. Then political dissensions arose within the mystic circle; half the monks were royalists, half were Carlists, and the latter, considering themselves oppressed, and muttering vengeance, whispered abroad tales of secret dungeons and of hidden torture. The public curiosity became excited. Many yet live who remember the scene when the convent doors were broken in by night, and the townsfolk, streaming through court and cloister, reached the room which had been designated, where, against a wall, by which it may still be traced, the dreaded rack was found, and beneath it a dungeon filled with human bones, and with other instruments of torture. Twenty-four hours were insisted upon by the authorities to give the friars a chance of safety: they

escaped, but only with their lives. Poblet, beautiful Poblet, was left in all its riches and perfection; nothing was taken away.

Then the avenging torrents streamed up the mountain side and through the open portals. All gave way before them; nothing was spared. "Destroy, destroy!" was the universal outcry. Every weapon of destruction was pressed into service. No fatigue, no labour was evaded. Picture, and shrine, and tomb, and fresco, fell alike under the destroying hammer; till, wearied with devastation, the frantic mob could work no more, and fire was set to the gorgeous sacristy, while the inestimable manuscripts of the library, piled heap upon heap, were consumed to ashes.

At the present time the story of that day of destruction is engraved on every wall. At first, you are unprepared. The little decorated chapel of St. George, on the right of the second entrance, is so little injured, that it might be taken for an ordinary ruin; then, passing the gate, one finds the remains of a series of frescoes, which tell the story of the Moorish invasion. Only the figure of one warrior and of the avenging angel are left, the rest is torn away; the lower pillars are gone, but their beautiful capitals, of monks seated amid rich foliage, are left.

Here one reaches the original front of the convent. On the left is another chapel, windowless and grass-grown, and behind it the remains of the hospital, which is reduced to a mere shell. In front, rise on one side the heavy machicolated towers which once flanked the main entrance, now bricked up,—and on the other, between statues of San Bernardo and San Benito, the entrance of the church. Here, in the ante-chapel, donkeys have their stalls around the tombs of kings; fragments of the royal sepulchres lie piled one upon another. On the right, in a dark niche, is the Easter sepulchre, richly wrought in marble: only the figure of the Saviour has been spared; the Virgin and saints, legless, armless, and noseless, stand weeping around. Below, a sleeping archbishop has escaped with less injury.

The Coro retains its portals of lumachella marble, but within it is utterly desolate, though overhead the grand vaulting of the roof, and its supporting columns, are perfectly entire. There is no partition now beyond this, and through the pillared avenue the eye pierces to the high altar, where the splendid retablo of white marble still stands erect, though all its delicate reliefs are shattered to fragments, even the figure of the



them than I was, as any one can see by referring to pp. 469-70 of the work.

But not to go into such an unpleasant subject as this, let us look in for a few minutes upon a Blind Class in Marylebone. It is held in a spacious church school-room. At first it seems strange that there should be only one gas-jet burning, and that half-turned down; but even that, one soon remembers, without, however, really realising the fact, is not needed by the blind people present. Fourteen or fifteen blind men and women are seated on the two sides of an oblong table. Some of them are chatting and laughing most merrily, making jokes, heartily appreciated not only by the makers, but also, a far rarer thing, by those for whose amusement they are made. All have books for the blind open on the table before them. Most of these look very much like the oblong music-books which swollen-cheeked cherubs hold in dim, yellow, old engravings. The little "sighted" guides who have brought the adult blind to the meeting, wander about the room curiously, or sit listlessly on the steps of the two school-galleries. The school-clock, in the dusky recess between the two galleries, looks so mournfully dim that it makes one think of an eye consciously losing its sight. But, as I have intimated, some of the blind folk are very merry, and almost all seem cheerful. The wag of the party evokes much laughter by describing a blind musician, known to the company, as possessing a fiddle nearly as high as himself. At the bottom of the table sit a blind woman and her blind daughter, evidently of a superior social grade to that of their companions. The pleasantly and educatedly spoken blind girl is teaching three blind children—two girls and a boy—to read. The youngsters lark over their lessons—not to shirk them, but because they thoroughly enjoy them. The boy is getting instructed in vowels, and when, so to speak, he laughingly grabs one, he is as delighted as a little boy with eyesight would be if he had caught the warm, palpitating little bird on whose tail he had been directed to put salt. When the class is dismissed the little blind boy goes about with his blind sisters, making good-night jokes; turning to mirth all things of earth as only childhood can—blind childhood included, thank God! On the left of the top of the table sits a brown-faced, good-tempered looking woman in an abbreviated black straw bonnet, noiselessly moving her lips, as her patient fingers traverse her book from left to right, and from right to left

*βουστροφηδόν*. Some of the readers mutter. Others proudly read aloud.

Next to my friend, Black Bonnet, sits an old woman, dreamily resting her grey-haired brow upon the hand of the arm she rests upon her book. Opposite Black Bonnet sits a bald-headed man, who is musing like the grey-haired old woman. He is almost deaf, as well as quite blind; his face brightens up when he puts into his ear the little trumpet-apparatus, by means of which, he says, he can *nearly* hear everything *distinctly*. Next to him sits a man with a sensible face, who engages in an argument—sensible on both sides—with the wag as to the respective merits of different modes of printing for the blind. Next to *him* sits another good-natured-looking, plumper, woman in spectacles. She does not know that I am present, but, so far as I can make out, she is saying that it was too bad of GOOD WORDS to make the blind out to be worse than they are. It is very interesting—often painfully interesting—to listen to the shrewd, well-chosen words in which the Poor Blind discuss subjects mooted before them, or which they start for themselves. The case of a blind man who has become insane is mentioned. "Ah, *that* is the greatest affliction that the Almighty can allow to come upon any man—lose your reason, and what is left?" is the exclamation which springs simultaneously, in almost identical words, from a dozen pair of lips. "Yes, that—and fits," adds quiet Black Bonnet.

In his book—a very interesting book to any one who takes any kind of interest in blindness—Mr. Levy has laid claim to the possession of what he calls "Facial Perception." This power of "seeing through the face," as they call it, the Marylebone blind people, to whom the portion of Mr. Levy's book describing it has been previously read, unanimously declare to be utterly foreign to their personal and recollected experience. As there can be no doubt, however, that Mr. Levy believes in the personal experiences he has recorded, I will quote his account of this "unrecognised sense," as either a physiological or else a psychological curiosity:—

"Whether within a house or in the open air, whether walking or standing still, I can tell, although quite blind, when I am opposite an object, and can perceive whether it be tall or short, slender or bulky. I can also detect whether it be a solitary object or a continuous fence, whether it be a close fence or composed of open rails, and often whether it be a wooded fence, a brick or stone wall, or a



quick-set hedge. I cannot usually perceive objects if much lower than my shoulder; but sometimes very low objects can be detected.

.... The currents of air can have nothing to do with this power, as the state of the wind does not directly affect it; the sense of hearing has nothing to do with it, as when snow lies thickly on the ground objects are more distinct, although the footfall cannot be heard. I seem to perceive objects through the skin of my face, and to have the impressions immediately transmitted to the brain. The only part of my body possessing this power is my face. .... Stopping my ears does not interfere with it, but covering my face with a thick veil destroys it altogether.

.... Dr. Saunderson could tell when a cloud obscured the horizon. At one time I could do this with great accuracy, but cannot now trust myself in this respect. .... The presence of fog interferes greatly with facial perceptions, the impressions of objects are faint and untrustworthy. .... Ordinary darkness is no inconvenience; anything, however, which attracts the other senses, such as noise, partially occupies the attention of the mind, and so interferes with the impressions received through facial perception. .... When passing along a street I can distinguish shops from private houses, and even point out the door and windows, &c., and this whether the doors be shut or open. When a window consists of one entire sheet of glass, it is more difficult to discover than one composed of a number of small panes. .... When objects below the face are perceived, the sensation seems to come in an oblique line from the object to the upper part of the face. While walking with a friend in Forest Lane, Stratford, I said, pointing to a fence which separated the road from a field, 'Those rails are not quite as high as my shoulder.' He looked at them, and said they were higher. We, however, measured, and found them about three inches lower than my shoulder. At the time of making this observation I was about four feet from the rails. .... When the lower part of a fence is brickwork, and the upper part rails, the fact can be detected, and the line where the two meet easily perceived. Irregularities in height and projections, and indentations in walls, can also be discovered" (pp. 64-6).

"Is he quite dark, do you know?" is the question with which Mr. Levy's claim to facial perception is dismissed.

The quietly pleasant, hard-working superintendent of the class—a Fifehire ex-Presbyterian, rather curiously developed into an

Episcopalian Scripture reader in London, retaining only the faintest flavour of his native accent—goes round the class, having a little friendly chat with every member of it, making remarks on what is being read, and so on. The wag tells him that Thanksgiving Day has "fair ruined London for the blind street folk." When asked to explain, he says that what with money given for seats, and the new dresses that were got, no one has any money left to lay out upon the poor.

"Well, but Easter and Whitsuntide are coming," a woman puts in.

"Ay," retorts the wag, "and whilst the grass is growing, the steed must starve."

The broad-shouldered, jolly-faced fellow looks so unlike starving that his dolorous prediction provokes a laugh. He joins in it heartily. "My looks will never pity my feelings, I know," he adds. "That's what I said to the matron when I'd been lying seventeen weeks and three days in hospital living on tea and bread and butter and weak broth, and she came in one day to ask me how I were."

The Scripture reader reads an extract from a book on physiology, making and encouraging remarks on what is read. Some one says that blood may be too rich as well as too poor.

"Well, richness won't be the fault of mine, I don't expect," says the wag with a chuckle. Then the blind people stand up and sing, "God moves in a mysterious way," &c., one deep bass rumbling like an organ swell. A roguish little "sighted" boy tries to make his blind father laugh, instead of singing so solemnly. Afterwards short prayers are read, or rather recited, and then a parable and a miracle are chosen for the Scripture readings. The healing of blind Bartimæus is the miracle selected. I fancy for the moment that it may make the poor people repine at the thought that no one nowadays goes about restoring sight; but I can discover no trace of such a feeling. The general cheerfulness of the Poor Blind is the characteristic of theirs which chiefly strikes me. Of course they must feel their affliction but, as a rule, one would fancy that, so far as the mere pleasures of sight are concerned they were not merely resigned, but quite contented under its loss. An old man who is asked to state what he knows about Jericho, fluently relates, with the self-satisfied glee of a child, the history of its siege and capture as given in Joshua.

A verse is next sung, and the benediction uttered, and threepence a-piece is given to



the blind people as payment for guides. When the rest have groped their way out into the rain, I get into conversation with a few who have remained to tell me something about themselves. The man I have called Wag and his blind wife are sitting together on a form. Wag says that "it is no good to let our spirits go down;" but he drops his funny tone in giving me the history of his hard life. Thus it runs:—

"Yes, sir, my name is Cattle. I live in the Marylebone Road. I sell with a hawker's license, and toil hard. I am out from ten till tea, and then am often obliged to go out again after class here to get a bit of bread. On Saturdays I am out till ten at night. I am led by a dog. I sell pens, pencils, almanacks—such things as are called stationery. Of course, I buy them at trade-price. I could not live if I bought them at a retail shop. I have been blind for twenty-eight years. I went to school and learnt to read and write well. I was a carrier's porter before the railways spoilt that business. Well—no, yes, no—I cannot say as to the police being hard on me. Well, yes, they will make me keep moving on. I was born in London. I make, perhaps, from eighteenpence to eightpence a day—sometimes not that. If I could make one and ninepence a day I should be well satisfied. I'd broke my leg, when I lay seventeen weeks in hospital. On Sundays I go to church and chapel."

A merry-toned street-musician, of the name of Alexander, next tells me his story:—

"I play the piccolo now, sir; what I can afford to buy I play on; instruments wear out, you know. I'm out from eleven to six, and then again till twelve—sometimes one in the morning. Saturday and Monday are my two best nights, when men are in work. Portland Town and Cambridge and Oxford Terrace are my best places. Once a week I go;—never go anywhere oftener than once a week. I like to give every one a fair chance. Oh, yes, of course, Christmas is the best time of the year for me. Everybody has got good feeling then. That's a settled case. No, I've no pension. You want influential friends to get any of the gifts.

"How do I get on at the crossings? Very well, thank you. I can manage. No, it's a mistake to suppose that people are ready to help blind folks over them. That's about the worst thing England has. There they'll let you stand without offering to help you, unless mayhap a lady or a gentleman will come up and lead you across themselves. Yes, I sometimes play in public. I'm bound

to, and I'm forced to drink by the customers. If I'll taste their beer they'll give me a copper, and if I won't, they won't. That's a regular case, and I've got a wife and three children, and five shillings and sixpence a week to pay for rent. It was through cold I lost my eyesight—inflammation, sore eyes. I'd a glimmer up to ten. Fever settled me. Oh, as to style of music, I suit it to my customers. Some like one thing, some another." (I tell him about Tittlebat Titmouse asking for "a little of both" to settle the *Before Jehovah's awful throne*, and *Battle of Prague* controversy.) "There now, that's what I call business. Oh, no, I don't mind telling you what I make. I like straightforward questions, because then I can give straightforward answers. From one shilling and sixpence to two shillings a day I reckon I ought to get, but I don't. Oh, yes" (bursting into a laugh), "I've heard that about blind musicians getting two pounds a day in London streets in former times. In present times you'd be two months about it. Sometimes I get hired for a dance, but very seldom, and then only by some one that knows me well. Sighted musicians, you see, are more amusing. I've been knocked down once or twice, but escaped, thanks be to God for it. I play by ear, but then, you see, one player has told me one thing, and another another, so that now I can understand notes when they're read to me. My missus and my children are not like me. The missus is sure of her money; she goes out charing. Well, the children a'n't old enough to work yet. The girl is fourteen. and the boys eight and five. Sometimes I take one of 'em out with me. Not that I want him, but he'll say, 'Father, take me for a walk,' and, of course, I can't say no. The missus is too busy to take 'em. Well, yes, the police are pretty good—I've no complaint to make.

"Thursday is my worst night of all. Yes, I tap as I go along; but it's only to give folks warning to get out of my way. As you want to get the truth, I'll give it you."

The last blind-man with whom I talk is the old man who gave the account of the siege of Jericho. His blind wife sits beside him. "Oh, dear, no, sir," he says, "that's quite a mistake. I'm not a musician. I can read music, but I cannot sing or play at all. My name is Newton. I live in Paradise Place. I sell stationery, note-paper, and so on. I used to sell periodicals—*London Journal*, *Bow Bells*, and such-like—in Somers Town. Oh, dear, no, sir, the police cannot interfere with me, I have my



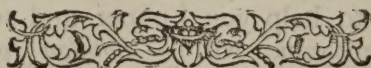
licence. I have a dog to guide me—this one I've got here" (the dog's chain is twisted round the old man's wrist). "I used to have a girl, but she was more bother than she was worth, and a dog won't tell lies, and cheat you, and keep the halfpence. My dog takes good care of me. If he sees a scaffold-pole, or a cellar-flap open, he makes a sudden stop. He's over-cautious of the carriages, and often loses me a good chance of getting over a crossing. He won't move if he fancies there's any danger for me. His name is Jack. No, sir, I don't think he's a terrier. He's of some German breed, I'm told. The only fault I have to find with him is that he is excessively dainty. I feed him on greeves and crusts of bread and meat twice a week. It's very seldom I make two shillings a day; sometimes I don't take more than one shilling gross. Last Saturday I took the magnificent sum of eightpence halfpenny. Any fine evening in summer is good for me. Saturday is my best day. Yes, I go into publichouses, and if I don't drink for the good of the house when a customer offers to treat me, the landlady won't let me inside again. I don't go into publics so much now as when I sold peri-

odicals in Somers Town. I had nineteen publicans there regular customers. I've been very ill for eighteen months—diabetes. My wife here sometimes goes out with me. Yes, she's blind, and so the Indigent Blind Society knocked off my one shilling a month for my marrying of her. But a blind woman keeps a blind man's house a deal tidier and comfortabler than a sighted woman would. I mend shoes. I learnt the chair-caning after I was sixty years old, but I'm not quick enough at it. This is my third blindness. From eight to seventeen I could read diamond type. I became totally dark twenty-four years ago. I was operated upon at —, and left in darkness for ever. They care more there for the pupils getting practice than for the patients' welfare. A great many people date their total darkness from having been operated on there. Mr. — told me that five out of six of the incurable blind that came to him, came from —. Oh, yes, sir, my Jack will take me just wherever I want to go. If I was to say to him "Go to Whitechapel, Jack," he'd lead me there straight. And now, sir, if you've no more questions to ask, I think we'll be moving."

CHARLES CAMDEN.

## TRUST.

I HAVE no rule, O Saviour, but Thy will;  
 I have no chart but Thine unerring word;  
 I have no guide but Thy clear whisper, heard  
 Above, behind, around, within me still.  
 I cannot trust my reason; questions fill  
 My mind, if e'er I seek to walk alone:  
 I cannot trust my heart; 'tis only known  
 To Thee, who searchest all its depths of ill:  
 I cannot trust my fellows; weak like me,  
 They have no strength or skill which is not Thine:  
 Lo! in Thy light, O Lord, true light I see:  
 Behold, I lean on Thy dear arm divine:  
 All my fresh springs, Redeemer, are in Thee:  
 So life, love, joy, and heaven itself are mine!





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